

the pool of vendor records as qualified for receiving an invitation for bid based on the results of the comparison.

In recognizing this deficiency, the Examiner cites the teachings of the Gustafson reference and particularly the Abstract as well as the Summary of the Invention section found in column 3, lines 18 through column 4, line 9. Applicant agrees with the Examiner's assessment that the Walker 207 reference is deficient at the very least for the reasons cited by the Examiner. However, Applicant submits that the Gustafson reference similarly fails to provide the requisite teaching or suggestion that renders Applicant's claimed invention invalid as being obvious in light of cited art. The applicable standard requires that there be some specific teaching or suggestion in the prior art regarding the recognized deficiency.

However, an examination of the reference and, particularly, the cited portions set forth by the Examiner confirms that the combination of references remains deficient and cannot support the Examiner's claim rejections. In support of the Examiner's position, the Examiner has asserted that it would have been obvious for a person skilled in the art to integrate the method of automatically identifying, matching, and evaluating information on a plurality of seller/vendor entities as disclosed by Gustafson. However, Applicant submits that this is not true because the Gustafson reference does not teach automatically matching and evaluating information on the plurality of entities in order to designate at least one group as being particularly qualified for selectively receiving an invitation for bid as claimed.

The Gustafson reference is merely directed to a system that accepts a given search entity from a user and utilizes a database in order to determine with relative degrees of accuracy the identity of a possible matching but unknown entity from a large list of entries contained in the database. More specifically, in Gustafson, a user inputs a plurality of identity-related attributes which are used to aid in the specific identification of a given entity and the system thereafter determines a possible matching entity and assigns a numerical

grade to reflect the matched quality of each identity-related attribute. Essentially, Gustafson is directly ascertaining the identity of a specific entity from among many and the grading system of Gustafson is merely directed to associating scores with the likelihood that the identity match is accurate. This is in sharp contrast with Applicant's presently claimed invention, which seeks to match not identity-related attributes but capability and other non-identity-related descriptive attributes, wherein a select group from a plurality of already known pre-approved members is automatically designated as being qualified to receive an invitation for bid as described in the instant application. The specific application to which the Gustafson reference is directed is the identification of a specific unknown entity to which credit will be granted. The systems and methods disclosed therein assigns a grade to each score of a plurality of the identity-related attributes with the grade being selected from a small number of grades in order to distinguish at least a clear match, a clear mismatch, or a possible match for a specific entity that is sought to be identified.

One particularly significant distinction is the fact that Gustafson merely seeks to correctly identify a specific unknown single entity from among a large number of entities contained in a database so that credit may be appropriately granted to the specifically desired entity. This identification process contrasts sharply with Applicant's presently disclosed and claimed invention wherein the bidding process is enhanced by automatically, selectively designating a group of known vendors who are particularly qualified to bid on a specific project. Indeed, the combination of Walker with Gustafson would not result in the specific innovations disclosed and claimed by the Applicant in the present application. The combination of Walker with Gustafson would merely result in a bidding system wherein the identity of a specific member in the database could be ascertained based on partial information with relative degrees of accuracy. Gustafson is not even an appropriate prior art reference as it is non-analogous art in that it is directed to solving a much different problem,

namely ascertaining the identity of a single member from a database based on incomplete or inaccurate identification information. It is clearly not directed to innovations in automated bidding systems or to providing bidding systems with enhanced efficiency through identifying qualified groups.

In contrast, Applicant's claimed invention is directed to a bidding process wherein the overall bidding systems and methods are improved through increased efficiency by selectively transmitting bid invitations to only those vendor entities (whose identity is already known by virtue of the fact that their membership in the buyer's overall vendor pool has been pre-approved) that are qualified to provide specific services or which are otherwise selectively designated as qualified based on certain specified characteristics. This increased efficiency could not be achieved by the combination of Gustafson and Walker.

In summary, the Applicant submits that the combination of Gustafson and WA207 reference would not result in Applicant's presently claimed invention. Furthermore, even if it were appropriate to make the combination of references as asserted by the Examiner, Applicant notes that this would not result in the selected transmission of bids to a group of vendors from a group of vendors in an overall vendor database.

In light of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner now withdraw these rejections and allow all claims in the application.

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Respectfully submitted,

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